



Decentralized cooperation in the Balkans



Macedonia

18th to 28th september 2008

Assessment & analysis of the assignment in the Hautes-Alpes

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Date : 10th October 2008



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Reminder of the objectives

(Taken from the Call for Proposals submitted to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs)

Main objective of the Assignment:

To inform and instruct the participants about different issues related to the main theme of mountain tourism.

The following themes were put forward:

- The place of winter and summer tourism in the mountains and how management and financial policies are adopted at different institutional levels namely, in the "Département", communities of communes and communes.
- Resulting social problems.
- The balance to be respected between economic development and environmental protection.
- Problems related to traffic and maintenance of road networks in the mountains.
- Water and waste management and their interaction with the policy of developing tourist activity.

Itinerary and programme

Thursday 18 September

Early afternoon - car rental and sorting out last minute details at the CRET.
Flight arrival at 10.30 pm at Lyon Saint Exupery airport. Overnight near the airport.

Friday 19 September

Late morning arrival in Briançon.
Lunch, and finalizing the programme. Drive over the Izoard Mountain Pass to Arvieux to meet up with Xavier Bletterie, operations manager for "water" at the Queyras Regional Natural Park. He is currently setting up the River Commission, recommended by the State, to implement an action plan over a period of 5 years in the areas of water quality, management of flooding risk, maintenance and enhancing the rivers.

Transfer and overnight spent at Ceillac.

Saturday 20 September

Meetings in the Queyras Regional Natural Park

Saint Matthieu Cattle Market at Chateau-Queyras.

This market demonstrates the vital importance of agriculture in the local economy, and the relationship that this traditional activity has with tourism.

Interview at 10.30 am by Valerie Garcin, local reporter for the Dauphiné Libéré, the only daily newspaper in the department. An article about cooperation between the Hautes-Alpes and Macedonia was published the very same day.

Meeting with Florence Olivereau, President of the Queyras Association of Craftsmen and Shopkeepers, and local councillor at the Chamber of Commerce and Industry. She showed us around the 'Maison de l'Artisanant' at Ville-Vieille, a crafts co-operative where nearly all the craftsmen in the Queyras sell their arts and crafts.

Florence Olivereau summed up the economic situation in the Queyras, emphasizing that you must not rest on your laurels and always be ready to listen to the clients.

Afternoon, visit Saint Véran, the highest village in Europe and the Soum museum, a traditional house.

Late afternoon, visit Fort Queyras.

Overnight at Ceillac.



Visit of Saint Véran

Sunday 21 September

Meetings in the Queyras Regional Natural Park

Yves Fouque, project manager for Macedonia and former deputy mayor at Ceillac, explained how the village of Ceillac has evolved.

At the town hall, explanation and study of the Local Town Planning Project (Plan Local d'Urbanisme PLU) as well as development plans for Drinking Water distribution and Sanitation.

Short 15 minute walk to a viewpoint over the valley to study the landscape and how it has changed since man settled here, before and after the arrival of tourism. Discussion about the concept of village resorts, ski resorts on a human scale.

Study of photos and old postcards.

Overnight at Ceillac.

Monday 22 September

Meetings at the Queyras Community of Communes

Stephanie Marcellin is the official representative for "household waste and recycling". As the General Council has set up a scheme for waste disposal and recycling, the discussion was extended to cover the whole of the Hautes Alpes region. Bertrand Joly, responsible for sanitation, explained the choices made and techniques used in the Queyras, where two major constraints exist, namely the cold and snowy climate and the variation between the amount of waste generated in the tourist season and off season. He also explained a technique using filtering reeds which is not expensive to run but cannot be used in freezing temperatures.

Cedric Brunet, Director of the Office for Promoting Tourism in the Queyras explained the difference between the local Tourist Offices, which welcome and inform tourists, and the Promotion Office in charge of promoting and marketing and which runs a tourist-monitoring "watchdog".

Transfer to Gap mid-afternoon. Welcomed at 6pm by Maurice Brun, President of the Hautes-Alpes Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCI), Jean-Pierre Petuau-Letang, Managing Director of the CCI and Mrs Chanfray, Director of departmental staff for the President of the General Council, Jean-Yves Dusserre.



'Maison de l'Artisanat' crafts cooperative at Queyras

Tuesday 23 September

Morning: meetings at the General Council

From 9.00 am to 10.45 am - discussion about the place of tourism in the Hautes Alpes with Patrice Cea, manager for tourism at the General Council and Sophie Franceschi from the Hautes-Alpes Tourist Advisory Board (Le Comité Départemental du Tourisme CDT). The presentation, followed by an exchange, was about demographic and economic evolution in the Hautes-Alpes, before and after the arrival of tourism. No subject was left out, even major problem areas were broached.

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In particular, the problem of the large amount of holiday homes only used for several weeks per year and the growing number of tourist apartment hotels more oriented towards short-term tax advantages than towards a real involvement in the life of the community was examined. Competition with other destinations in France such as the country or city breaks is also growing considerably. The difference between the number of tourist nights spent during the summer and winter with 13 million and only 8 million respectively was also emphasized. The Hautes-Alpes Tourist Advisory Board (CDT) is responsible for tourist policy for the Hautes-Alpes region, deals with communication and promotion, and informs and advises clients. It has set up a tourist-monitoring watchdog to better understand clients' expectations.

At 11.00 am, meeting with Mr Agnel, deputy managing director in charge of Development and Planning, and Adrien Nackle, deputy managing director in charge of Resources on the theme of decentralization. This exchange helped to clarify the French multi-layered system with many territorial structures and their different functions. In Macedonia there are only two levels, namely the State and the communes. Resources at each level were examined in detail, including funds from the State, and direct and indirect tax systems. The discussion was not merely technical based on figures but also political relating the stormy relationships that at times exist between the State and local authorities.

Departure from Gap about 4.00 pm.

From 5 to 7pm, meeting with Joel Giraud, the deputy Mayor of L'Argentière La Bessée and Vice-President of the Provence Alpes Cote d'Azur General Council, representative for Mountains and opening up areas.

L'Argentière La Bessée has successfully redeveloped, converting from heavy industry in aluminium to a tourism revival based on white water sports and mountaineering. We were welcomed by Joel Giraud, followed by an enjoyable tour of the main facilities, namely the Mine Museum and the White Water Sports Ground, guided by Yann Coburn, Director of the Cultural Department. Later, the Mayor and Patrick Vigne, Deputy Mayor, gave a presentation, illustrated with photographs, of how this change took place. Joel Giraud referred to the European Association of Mountain Representatives (Association Européenne des Elus de Montagne <http://www.annot.org/aem.html>) which the commune of Tetovo could join. The enjoyable afternoon ended with an exchange of presents and a drink!



Meeting at General Council



With Joël Giraud

Wednesday 24 September

Morning

Feedback session, clarifying several points, and pooling information gathered by each member of the delegation.

Afternoon

General council

Meeting with Jean Claude Deville, Director for Infrastructures and Transport at the General Council. Mr Hasani asked some very technical and specialized questions about the division of labour between different authorities in the fields of construction and road maintenance, techniques used and respective budgets for each authority.

Thursday 25 and Friday 26 September

Meetings in Briançon and the Guisane Valley

Morning

Transfer from Gap to Briançon;

Meeting at the CRET for a half-way point feedback session, to identify priorities and draw up guidelines for the continuation of cooperation between the Hautes-Alpes and Tetovo (please see the conclusion and prospects)

Delicious meal at the Cret, prepared by Laurent Berruyer, chef in charge of training students for the Professional Certificate in Catering (Certificat d'Aptitude Professionnelle or CAP). This gave us the occasion to taste traditional dishes from the Hautes-Alpes: "picholines" olives with anchovies and almonds - snails "à la martingoise, baked in the oven with hazelnuts, aubergines, and cream - chicken with mushrooms "marasme d'oréade" - local cheeses - praline chocolate "à l'argousier", (a local plant).

All washed down with local fruit juices and local wine - this was one of the most enjoyable moments of the assignment and by far the best meal!

Afternoon

2.30 pm Cultural heritage development

Welcomed by Catherine Valdenaire, councillor responsible for tourism and heritage.

Meeting with Isabelle Fouilloy, Director of the Heritage Department in Briançon. She is an expert on the subject and explained the function of her department and how it is run, educational activities and the involvement of the local population in preserving heritage. She told us about the Association des Villes d'Art et d'Histoire (Association of Art and Historic Towns) in protected areas (<http://www.an-patrimoine.org/>) which is already in contact with Macedonia.

The afternoon ended with a guided tour of the Old Town of Briançon by the experienced heritage guide, Julie Cruz.



At the Community of Communes in Briançon

Friday 26 September

Morning

Visit Serre Chevalier ski resort, the biggest ski resort in the Hautes-Alpes and 13th in France in terms of turnover, and the Tourist Office shared by the 3 villages in the Guisane Valley. We saw how town planning and architectural style have changed over the decades since the resort was set up in the 70's. We compared buildings from different periods to those under construction today, which better respect local, traditional architecture. Our visitors commented on some details noticed such as the recycling bin for ski passes and the children's corner and internet access in the Tourist Office.

Late morning

Briançon area Community of Communes

We were welcomed by Beatrice Chevalier, director and Monique Ollagnier, deputy in charge of education, councillors from the CCI, Mr Dietsché, manager of the CRET and journalists from the Dauphiné Libéré and Alpes 1 Radio.

Afternoon

Visit of the sewage Works

Henri Raoux, Mayor of Saint Chaffrey in Serre Chevalier, responsible for the environment for the Briançon Community of Communes.

Bruno Triboulet, project manager for the SEERC company, branch of the Lyonnaise des Eaux Suez

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group and franchise holder for the sewage works.

Cecile Rioffray, responsible for sanitation for the Briançon community of communes.

This state-of-the-art sewage works is currently being tested. The visit gave rise to some very technical discussions between Mr Hasani and Mr Triboulet.

Saturday 27 September

Return to Lyon Saint-Exupéry airport.

Sunday 28 September

Flight at 6.25 am.



Visit of the Briançon sewage works

Conclusion

During this assignment, both sides really got to know and trust each other. A close relationship was formed, as it became apparent that the current situation in Tetovo and surrounding villages is very similar to that in the Hautes-Alpes in the not so distant past. In particular, this can be seen with the closure of industrial sites and the decline of agriculture forcing people to leave the area.

All the meetings were successful with good contacts formed throughout.

The different exchanges were informative and interesting, but also simple and convivial, showing the solidarity and understanding between mountain people.

The vital importance of tourism, in stopping people leaving the area, in creating local employment and, although not pretending to be a miraculous solution, in keeping young people "close to home" was stressed throughout the meetings. In certain valleys in the Hautes-Alpes, a reversal has been observed with people slowly moving back. However, this change didn't happen overnight, was a bit of a random process and not without some problems.

Throughout the exchanges, the same thing, almost like a leitmotif, kept being emphasized, namely that it is essential to constantly adapt to the clients' changing expectations, and to national and international competition which is becoming harder and harder.

In the region of Tetovo, apart from the Popova Sapka ski resort and some cultural sites, tourism is still in its early stages. However, there is great potential which needs to be developed through structuring facilities, communication and training the local population for different jobs related to tourism.

Facilities necessary for developing tourism were studied at all levels. Again, the same observation was stressed, relevant to all fields: - never work alone but in networks; work with your competitors and that no activity or client is too small.

The way in which the country is run has been studied from all angles. It took several sessions for the participants to understand all the subtleties and small details. For them to understand who does what needed several explanations as France has many different local authorities which can each have adaptable jurisdiction whereas in Macedonia there are only the State and the communes - which at times made us all jealous!

Discussions about waste and water management proved very worthwhile for Mr Hasani, an expert on the subject. Each person put forward their achievements and problems confronted whether in Tetovo or in the Hautes-Alpes. The current stakes in Tetovo are the same as in the Hautes-Alpes several years ago, and it became apparent that, in fact, we are really not much further forward than all that.

All the participants left full of motivation and enthusiasm, ready to start short-term projects to make mountain tourism an activity in its own right.

Strategies for 2009

As a high number of plans were discussed, we had to decide which ones fell within the expertise of the CRET and which should be dealt with by other partners.

Where the issues were not closely linked to the field of mountain tourism, we agreed to put the commune of Tetovo in touch with competent organizations. The priority for the town of Tetovo is the development of the Popova Sapka ski resort. The cable car linking Tetovo to the ski resort has to be modernised to meet required standards and the ski area needs bringing up to date. Artificial snow making also has to be introduced. We are therefore going to contact French consultants and put them in touch with Tetovo.

Mountain tourism, the main theme of the 2008 decentralized cooperation plan, remains topical.

Returning home after such a busy trip, our visitors are bound to feel overwhelmed by the sheer size of the task in hand and not to know where to start. Therefore our support is essential for defining priority actions and ensuring the construction of solid bases from the very start. In the town of Tetovo and surrounding villages, as the organization of tourism is in its early stages, there are few professional contacts available, either at State level or locally - in fact currently they are practically non-existent!

Therefore, in the short-term it is important to begin structuring what already exists, and to inform members of the population who could be interested in getting involved in these projects; it is also essential to involve the younger generations as soon as possible.

Therefore for 2009, the following strategies have been decided:

- Help in setting up a tourist office in Tetovo and support for tourist policy-making (Valmir Aziri is in contact with Yves Fouque about this).
- Help in setting up new sports activities such as via ferrata, MTB, Nordic skiing etc, by locating suitable sites.
- Continuing professional training for mountain guides with a training programme and support towards validation (with the Federation of Mountain clubs and Kostantin Ciriviri).
- Informing classes in schools and high schools about jobs related to mountain tourism such as mountain guide, accommodation provider etc.,(Faton Cherifi 's project to introduce a group of young students to mountain activities during school holidays) as well as in the villages (a supplementary section demonstrating how enhancing the value of local produce has a resulting effect on agriculture).
- Education about the environment using educational resources on "water and waste" given to the French Institute, used or demonstrated in pilot classes.
- Organising a press trip or for French travel agents.
- Awareness-raising of the value (in all senses of the word) of both urban and village heritage and its protection and development. This could be the subject of a Tandem 2009 project.
- Locating crossborder itineraries with Kosovo and Albania and getting in touch with villages on the other side of the border to evaluate potential.

APPENDICES

Key People Met

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Stéphanie Marcellin, responsible for recycling
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Hautes Alpes Departement

Details

- Surface area: (5 632 km²)
- Number of inhabitants: 133 000 (estimated in 2005)
- Population density : 22 inhabitants/km²

Number of communes : 177

- Prefecture : Gap: 37 200 inhabitants
- Sub-prefecture - Briançon : 12 100 inhabitants
- 1/3 of the Department lies above 2 000 m

Two Natural Parks:

- The Ecrins Natural Park (91800 ha or 226842.7 acres protected area ,of which 57 900 ha or 143 074 acres lies within the Hautes Alpes Department)
- the Queyras Regional Natural Park (65 000ha or 160 618.5 acres)

Population by age group:

- under 20: 24.1%
- 20 to 59: 52.4%
- 60 and over: 23.4%

In 2003, the working population was 48 455 employees, with

- 926 employed in agriculture
- 2 664 in industry
- 3 335 in construction
- 41 530 in the service industries

Climate

The average number of hours of sunshine per year is 2 505 ; an average of 905mm rainfall and an average temperature throughout the year of 10.9 °C

Tourism

2006/2007 - 20.3million bed-nights spent by tourists (7.2 million during the winter and 12.3 during the summer season)

- 212 hotels
- 143 guest houses (chambres d'hotes)
- 21 holiday villages
- 44 mountain refuges
- 175 gîtes d'étape (stopover accommodation)
- 25 tourist apartment hotels
- 121 camp sites

Tourism is the main activity, with a total of 338 245 beds for tourists. This can be broken down into 165 823 beds in letting accommodation (hotels, apartments etc), 172 422 beds in holiday homes, and 208 524 beds for tourists in ski resorts.

In 2004, the Department recorded nearly 22.5 million bed-nights spent by tourists which can be broken down to 8.4 million during the winter from December to April, and 14.1 million the rest of the year. Several different sources estimate turnover from tourism at a billion Euros.

Sporting Activities

- 2 000km of rivers , 500km navigable rivers
- Serre-Ponçon : the largest earthen dam in Europe with a volume of 14 000 000 m3 and a surface area of 3 600m2
- 6 800 km of hiking trails
- 31 ski resorts and 21 Nordic skiing areas , 46% of the Provence Alpes Cote d'Azur region
- 29 sites for hangliding and paragliding
- 4 airfields - 1st European Parachuting Centre

Cultural Activities

- 158 historic monuments (72 listed and 86 classified) including 89 religious monuments
- 37 museums (including 1 listed and the "Hautes-Alpes" museum)
- 5 themed routes: Route des Grandes Alpes, Route Napoleon, Lavender Route, Fruit and Wine Route and Sundial Route

Economic Indicators

- 1863 agricultural farms
- 340 industries
- 599 construction companies
- 1080 shops and businesses
- 2 777 service industries

Total amount of tax paid, in million Euros

- Income tax : 82.37
- Business tax : 48.27
- Local taxes and accessory taxes : 167.69
 - Rates (taxe fonciere) on buildings : 78.86
 - Rates (taxe fonciere) on land : 3.39
 - Community tax (Taxe d'habitation) : 32.18
 - Professional tax : 53.16
- VAT : 170.44

Price of real estate

Average price per m2 for old apartments (over 5 years)	2 420 €
Average price per m2 for new -build apartments	3 660 €
Average price for an old house (over 5 years)	213 800 €
Average price for constructible land	90 000 €