

CAPITALISATION OF THE  
ACTIVITIES IN  
**NORTH  
MACEDONIA**  
AND  
**NORMANDY**  
THROUGH THE PROGRAM  
**NORMANDY  
FOR PEACE**

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# INTRODUCTION


Europe is home to the remains of the First and Second World Wars, two of the most terrible conflicts in modern times. These marks of a dark past are found throughout the continent and beyond, they are a constant reminder of the atrocities of war and human violence. Throughout the construction of new regional collaboration, European countries were able to address the events of the past and commit themselves to promoting common **peaceful values** in order to prevent future violence.

By focusing on **regional reconciliation**, the countries of Western Europe have joined their capacities, despite their divisions, to ensure **sustainable development and stability**. In 2012, the Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to the European Union, pointing out the importance of regional collaboration for the facilitation of **lasting peace** and fighting the tensions brought by the rise of nationalism.

New European collaboration was possible thanks to **good neighbourly relations**, after the various European countries focused on their duty of remembrance. It is important to remember that the history shared between different people must be processed in an inclusive manner through the establishment of **dialogue** between communities. The traumatic events of the violent conflicts of history have often been manipulated to incite nationalism and exacerbate divisions.

The historical event of which our collaboration will focus on is the history of the Macedonian Front of 1915-1918.






During the Great War, the armies of the Triple Entente and the Triple Alliance faced each other across all of Europe, and the Macedonian Front designated the battles that took place in the Balkan Peninsula. These include soldiers from all over Europe, several thousand from **France**, but also from the populations spread across **Greece, Albania, Bulgaria, and North Macedonia**.

The involvement of soldiers and Balkan populations in the events of the Macedonian Front exceeded borders and created a new link between countries through shared history.

Collaboration with experts from different countries involved in the conflict, such as the Norman specialists, enables the **enrichment** of the knowledge of the countries' own history through new studies.

The Balkan peninsula was the grounds of extensive violence during many conflicts from the beginning of the twentieth century and new ones at the break-up of Yugoslavia. Nationalistic narratives and ethnic violence have awakened divisions and destroyed the foundations of a regional community. The unilateral and ethnocentric narratives of history have prevented the establishment of **lasting and prosperous relationships**. Hate speech between different communities has still not been effectively **deconstructed** despite recent atrocities in the region.

Compared to the rest of Europe, the Balkan countries are **lagging** behind in their economic, human and democratic development. The creation of the European Union has shown that close regional cooperation ensures sustainable development.




By raising the importance of the duty of **remembrance** and the **reconciliation** process, the actions described below aim to develop lasting peace and integration.

## A LONG LASTING PARTNERSHIP

Cooperation between Normandy and Macedonia began in 2006 when the Regional Council of Lower Normandy launched a decentralized cooperation project with the Republic of Macedonia. In 2007, they formalised their **partnership** and began a three-year program supported by the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, through a derogation allowing French regions to have bilateral collaboration with a foreign state. Since then, **three triennial programs** have been carried out on local governance with the main goal of linking local elected officials and stakeholders, **exchanging experiences** on decentralization, and support for the European integration of the Republic of Macedonia.

The Regional Council of Lower Normandy promoted and supported the creation of **decentralized cooperation** between Lower Normandy and the Macedonian communities. A total of 18 communities committed, 14 of which were active at the end of the last program (2013/2015). The involvement of these communities was essential to **develop actions** at the local level and to reach the decentralized cooperation's objectives in terms of **local governance and democracy**. In January 2016, the French Territorial Reform brought about many changes, including the merging of the French Regions.




Lower and Upper Normandy have merged into a single region, Normandy. International strategies have been redefined and the new Norman executive has chosen to focus its action on Macedonia and the issues of Peace and Memory from the Macedonian Front.

With its Normandy for Peace Program, the Normandy region has been able to develop new channels of cooperation.

The partnerships of this program cover many fields, such as youth, media, culture, and new technologies. By strengthening exchanges and being part of a true European collaboration, this Norman program seeks to preserve the **values of peace** and freedom. The certified partnerships of the Normandy for Peace Program are part of the **international strategy** of the Normandy region and the exportation of its expertise. In 2016, this program brought the Macedonian Front Project to North Macedonia in order to raise public awareness through its own heritage.

### ALDA and Normandy for Peace

The European Association for Local Democracy (ALDA), created in 1999, is one of the main partners of which the cooperation between Normandy and North Macedonia relies on. Although ALDA has been registered as a French association, one can find its offices in Brussels, Vicenza, Skopje, Chisinau, Tunis and Strasbourg. One of the main objectives of ALDA is to promote, at a local level, **better cooperation** between public authorities and citizens through **good governance** practices and citizen engagement.




ALDA's activities seek to **reconnect** the different communities and local actors in order to have a better response to contemporary issues.

ALDA can count on an international network of associations for local democracy (LDA), which work under its guidance. Together, they promote values in favour of human rights and, to a certain extent, for a European identity.

ALDA Skopje's office also covers the functions of the Normandy-North Macedonia Decentralized Cooperation Office and the Balkan Network for Local Democracy. Through its expertise and multiple responsibilities, ALDA Skopje manages a strong network that extends throughout the Balkans. ALDA, is thus a privileged partner in North Macedonia, it has made it possible to deepen and bring **bilateral relations** to a whole new level. It has a coordinating role between Norman and Macedonian stakeholders, bringing public authorities, institutions, associations and experts to **work together**. Moreover, thanks to its network of partners and its experience in European and regional projects, ALDA has made it **possible** to include partners from neighbouring countries, placing North Macedonia at the heart of a Balkan collaboration.

Thanks to new policies promoting decentralization and international collaboration, the Normandy region decided to develop a better European and global integration.

The Normandy for Peace Program is part of the region's desire to share its history as a martyred region of the First and Second World Wars, in order to promote **humanist values**.



Since 2017, Normandy organizes the Normandy World Peace Forum every year in Caen, and offers a gathering for **discussion** to address the new problems and threats our planet is facing. In addition, throughout the year, the program includes the possibility of exporting Norman expertise abroad, through collaborations based on knowledge exchange.


## SEEKING PEACE AND STABILITY

Through strong collaborations and ambitious projects, ALDA seeks to develop sustainable activities, opening up Europe to North Macedonia. The issue of **peace and reconciliation** is the partnership's priority, in order to achieve better integration in the region and to revitalize relations with other neighbouring countries. Many tensions remain to be addressed and the ties that unite the countries must be **strengthened** again.

North Macedonia is located in the heart of the Balkan Peninsula and is far from being the only country to have issues with its neighbours. The projects, supported by the Normandy Peace Program and ALDA, seek to re-establish genuine good-neighbourly relations in the Balkans. Although wars and violence are now over, **reconciliation** and **regional collaboration** are still to be rebuilt to allow the flourishing of this European peninsula.

Each year the Normandy-Macedonian partnership continues to mobilize **numerous regional actors** and specialists for the development of projects concerning peace and reconciliation.





These activities provided a new impetus for relations between **public authorities, civil society and Macedonian citizens**. Thanks to the exchanges carried out, North Macedonia and Normandy were not only able to address forgotten topics but also offered a **new way of communication** between the communities and their representatives.

The will of North Macedonia to integrate the European Union is clear and the European authorities have also stated their desire once more to expand the organization to the rest of the European countries.

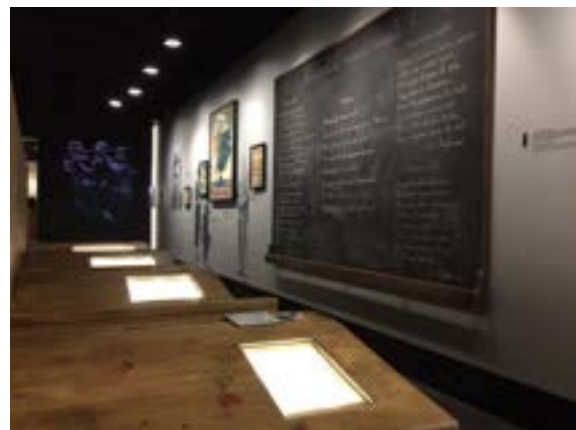
As the Balkans have faced various conflicts, the establishment of **close regional cooperation** offers a better perspective to preserve stability and facilitate European integration.

## REMEMBRANCE OF THE MACEDONIAN FRONT (2016)

The Remembrance project of the Macedonian Front is part of the project of the Normandy Region and its Normandy for Peace Program, it is based on Norman expertise in **post-conflict situations**.

Through the remains of the wars in the region, the program seeks to **raise awareness** among the public about the consequences of these wars and the importance of the handling of the past for reconciliation. One of the main objectives of the collaboration between the Normandy region and ALDA Skopje is the **study and rehabilitation** of the memorial heritage in North Macedonia, in order to develop cultural activities and heritage tourism.

It was possible to **mobilize** a network of Norman and Macedonian specialists who examined historical events and who were able to exchange on their methodological **expertise**. The exchanges are not limited only to the scientific field but also take on a cultural and educational scope.



Study Visit, Caen Normandy  
2016

The objective of this collaboration is **mutual development**, with productions on the Norman and Macedonian territory.

## Cultural and scientific activities

In the spring of 2016, supported by the Institut français in Skopje, a scientific support group and a group of researchers on the history of the Macedonian Front in North Macedonia was established. This project brings together specialists from different fields such as history, ethnology, archaeology, tourism and heritage. Several meetings were held during the year to define and to coordinate the themes of study and to organize the upcoming program for the year 2017.

This international collaboration between researchers from the Balkans and Normandy aims to revive and bring a new perspective to scientific studies. A presentation of the research was made online and at a press conference.

Development of the scientific website Remembrance of the Macedonian Front in order to list all the advances and knowledge acquired by the various research projects around the heritage of the Great War in North Macedonia.



Visit of villages near Bitola

## Promotion of heritage

In 2016, a first experimental collaboration was signed in the small municipality of Novaci in North Macedonia, between Norman heritage tourism experts and local Macedonian stakeholders.



Thanks to a **partnership** with the Bitola Museum, archaeological surveys with members of the association Mémoire pour la vie have been carried out in the region, and the **knowledge acquired** at the end of the project was published on the internet and presented at a **public conference**.



Scientific Support Group on the Front

By including the tourism stakeholders but also the students of the Bitola Faculty of Tourism and the local population, a **strategy for tourism** started to be developed for Novaci and its surroundings.

## Public awareness

**Several events** were organized for the people of North Macedonia in order to offer them a **new contemporary approach** of the region's history and value the local heritage. The various events include the broadcast of the film *L'artiste du Front - Valentin*, the promotion of the photographs of Studio Manaki in Caen, and the **revalorization** of the Bitola Memorial.



*L'artiste du Front - Valentin*



## REMEMBRANCE OF THE MACEDONIAN FRONT (2017-2018)

The launch of cooperation between Normandy and North Macedonia on peace, reconciliation and memory was initially met with a **certain reluctance** from the Macedonian side. The complexity of the situation in the Balkans and the long-lasting challenges arising from its past have made this **collaboration all the more necessary**. Through a better exchange of expertise and sharing of experiences, it is possible to develop a less biased approach. The 2017-18 activities are a continuation of projects from previous years and build on previous **networks and achievements**.



ALDA at the Normandy for Peace Forum 2018



A memorial expedition to Bitola

## Youth

In order to **deepen the research** on the Macedonian Front in North Macedonia, the office of ALDA Skopje hosted a Norman student in second year of history master's from the University of Caen from the 16th of October, 2017 to the 12th of January, 2018. The internship consisted of developing the website **"Discover the remembrance of the Macedonian Front"** and promoting a partnership with the Erasmus+ program.

The students and teachers of the high school "La Rouquelle" in Coutances and their classmates of the high school "Josip Broz Tito" in Bitola were able to meet from the 19th to the 26th of April 2018 during a **school exchange** in North Macedonia. The meeting between students and teachers from two different regions takes part in the **development of a European identity**. During their stay the participants were able to attend events on the issues of memory, peace and European citizenship.



High schoolers from Normandy  
French military cemetery of Bitola

In the school "Sauxmarais" of Cherbourg-en-Cotentin, the students took part in the educational project "In the footsteps of the first colonial" and thus carry out research and then a presentation on the Macedonian Front and North Macedonia. This educational project was carried out in collaboration with the high schools of Veles and Bitola.

## Cultural and scientific activities

A summer school named "Memory and intercultural dialogue" was organized in Skopje by the FON University. The event was held from the 17th to the 22nd of July 2017.



"Memory and intercultural dialogue"  
FON university, Skopje

The event was attended by more than 30 participants from seven Balkan countries, as well as six young students from France and one speaker from Normandy. The event focuses on the themes promoted by the Normandy for Peace Program, such as reconciliation and the duty of remembrance.

During the film festival "Frères Manaki", a documentary film about the two brothers' studio in Bitola, from the war time, was broadcasted.

A monograph by photographer Robert Jankulovski under the name of "Manaki, a story in images" was exhibited in Bitola on the 29th of September, 2017, then in Belgrade on the 18th of January, 2018 in the gallery «Artget».



Monograph: Manaki, a story in images

On the 11th of November 2017, an **armistice commemoration** was held at the French Cemetery in Bitola and the German Cemetery in Prilep, where wreaths of flowers were laid. This day was an opportunity to bring together members of the embassies, Macedonian representatives and civil society associations.

In Bitola, the second largest city in Macedonia, a **colloquium** is held each year by the Institut français of Skopje to address the events of the First World War and to create a **place of reflection** on the shared past in the Balkans. After a new meeting of the **scientific support group**, the research carried out in the framework of the Remembrance of the Macedonian Front project was presented during the 2017 colloquium, from the 10th to the 14th November, entitled “Balkan Societies in the Eastern Front: Memory(s) and Perspective(s)”.

The experts from the Balkans and France invited to the seminars, were able to experience the new sight-seeing tour focused on memory and organized around the remains of the Macedonian Front in the region of Bitola.



Bitola Memorial  
Before the march of remembrance

In January 2018, the Photography Centre of Macedonia launched the **project** "Rephotograph and memory". Fifty contemporary photographs were taken on the same site as the works of the Manaki brothers, creating a **retrospective** on the evolution of the region, which extends to the neighbouring countries. A catalogue of the photographs was published, and they were then exhibited again at the Bitola Museum.



For the centenary of the Macedonian Front 1918-2018, a **colloquium** on "The protection of non-fighters, from the Macedonian Front to the present day", was organized from the 31st of May to 3rd of June 2018, bringing together 16 experts from France, North Macedonia and the rest of the Balkans.

A **visit** in the trenches of the Great War was organized, as well as a **concert** in French by the group Foltin from Bitola. On June 3rd, the March of Remembrance began, following backwards the course of the infantrymen from Thessaloniki to Bitola.



Centenary of the Macedonian Front 1918-2018 Bitola, 2018

From the 7th to the 8th June, 2018, at the Normandy World Peace Forum, ALDA had the opportunity to **animate a booth** in the Village for Peace.

It was thus possible to introduce to the visitors the activities carried out on the Macedonian Front, the Normandy-North Macedonia collaboration, and to a greater extent the **importance of the questions** on the duty of **remembrance** and reconciliation.



Forum for peace, Caen, Normandy

### Promotion of heritage

In July 2017, in partnership with the association Mémoire pour la liberté, **new archaeological exploration** was carried out in the Novaci region following the events of the Great War.

**New methods** have been used to realise the research, such as 3D photography, drone aerial photography and laser scanning.



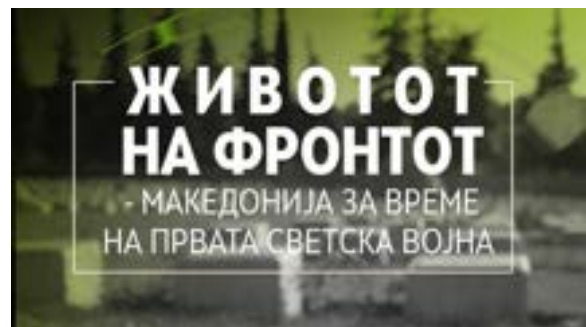
Cultural and educational materials

### Cultural and educational materials

After various **research and collaborations** carried out over the years, a **history manual** entitled “Life on the Front – Macedonia during the First World War” was published in Macedonian and then translated into French. A **specific approach** was taken in order to focus on the human and social consequences of the war, and later to be used in schools.

By listing some of the sites of the First World War, tourism stakeholders were able to **develop a tour** to highlight heritage tourism on the Macedonian Front.

Thanks to the mobilization of Norman experts on the heritage tourism, stakeholders in North Macedonia and neighbouring countries were able to **rethink their touristic strategy**.



Life on the Front – Macedonia during the First World War

In 2017, in order to reach a wider audience and promote the findings on the Remembrance of the Macedonian Front project, an **online platform** called Discover the Remembrance of the Macedonian Front of the First World War was launched, where it is possible to not only consult on the information on the monuments of the First World War but also on the **complex history** of the Macedonian Front.



[frontorient14-18.org](http://frontorient14-18.org)

Over the years, the **new knowledge** gathered through the various partnerships has been regularly added to the website, covering many fields such as: military and social history, ethnology, geography, but also memory, peace and reconciliation.

## REMEMBRANCE OF THE MACEDONIAN FRONT (2019-2020)

The **Remembrance of the Macedonian Front project** took place throughout 2019 and 2020, as an extension on the previous years' activities. Thanks to the studying of a shared history, France and North Macedonia have seen their **relations strengthened** and took on **new perspectives**. The project brought together many different partners, such as associations, scientific and academic institutions, and regional and national authorities.

Remembrance of the Macedonian Front aims to deal with the events of the First World War through the **remains we find today** in North Macedonia. During this conflict people from every part of the region have been affected, that is why the project and its events **integrate** neighbouring nations, such as Albania, Greece, Bulgaria and especially the other countries of Yugoslavia.



Workshop:  
Understanding history together

One of the **final goals** of this project is to be able to offer local people **new ways of exchange** and awareness-raising activities on a common past in order to develop a new sense of tolerance and the basis of a united society, and to some extent better integration into the European area.

## Youth

ALDA is committed to **promoting the Freedom Prize** created by the Institut des droits de l'Homme et de la Paix for the Normandy Peace Forum.

The aim is to mobilize young people from North Macedonia and the region to promote human and universal values.



Norman and macedonian high schoolers



Several history students from the universities of Caen and Rouen had the **opportunity to carry out internships** in North Macedonia, to work on the events of the Macedonian Front.

Various institutions were able to **welcome students** for the realization of their internship, such as the Institut français of Skopje, the Institute of National History of Skopje or the office of ALDA.

The students of the Thomas Pesquet technical High School "Building hub" of Coutances in Normandy and their classmates of the «Josip Broz Tito» High School from Bitola in North Macedonia had the opportunity to participate in a **binational project**.

They worked with their professors on the themes of identity, unity, diversity and the notion of **European citizenship** through the conflicts of the 20th century and their heritage.

From the 4th to the 18th of October, 2019, a **school exchange** was organized and 30 students from Bitola were able to visit their Norman comrades in Coutances.

By discovering the sites of Normandy and experiencing **heritage tourism**, the students exchanged in more detail on the European experience and the issue of reconciliation.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Norman students' visit to Bitola had to be cancelled.

A **workshop** entitled "Understanding History Together" was organized from the 21st to the 22nd of December 2019, where high school students from Skopje, Ohrid and Bitola met in the capital to address history through **different perspectives**.

This workshop, hosted by the Centre for Research on Nationalism and Culture (CINIK), presented to students the **complexity of conflict and reconciliation**.

The diversity of experiences of ethnic groups were able to be expressed and brought a **critical look** at the ethnocentric narration of historical narratives.



High schoolers from Bitola, Ohrid, Skopje

The ALDA Skopje office welcomed two young French people as part of an **ERASMUS+ volunteer program**.

From October 2019 to September 2020, the two volunteers took part in ALDA projects in North Macedonia, developing activities for the Macedonian youth.

They were able to promote citizen engagement, European mobility and introduce the notion of **reconciliation and memory** to different publics.

## Cultural and scientific activities

Named "History, memory and literature", this colloquium dedicated to the Macedonian Front aims to offer a **place to exchange** for historians from the region, it took place in Skopje and was retransmitted online.



УНИВЕРЗИТЕТ  
„Св.КЛИМЕНТ ОХРИДСКИ“  
БИТОЛА

INSTITUT  
FRANÇAIS  
SKOPJE

Named «History, memory and literature», this colloquium dedicated to the Macedonian Front aims to offer a **place to exchange** for historians from the region, it took place in Skopje and was retransmitted online.

During this second edition, more than 80 participants gathered to follow the **interventions** of eight experts. Different topics were discussed such as the **impact of the First World War** on European societies, the reconciliation process between the two wars and today, as well as the **testimonies** found in the literature.

This **symposium** also included an exhibition under the name of «Macedonian Front, yesterday and today» from a collaboration between the Normandy for Peace Program, the University of Bitola "Saint Clement" and the Military Museum of Skopje.

The exhibition included photographs of the 10-day trail, March of Remembrance, carried out along the trenches of the Macedonian Front, from Bitola to Thessaloniki, in tribute to the infantrymen in Macedonia. There were also **literary extracts and photographs** of the soldiers of the Macedonian Front on the same sites.



Symposium : History, memory and literature

The exhibition can be found today on the website of the French Ministry of Defence and in the Military Museum of Skopje. The work on **remembrance** carried out by the students of the bilingual high school of Bitola in cooperation with the high school "Jean Mermoz" of Vire in Normandy was presented at this **symposium**.

The second part of the symposium was focused on the questions of **reconciliation and European integration** with animated debates, taking a **local dimension** with the Balkans, then regional with the European Union, while keeping a look on the past and the future.

With this conference, the Institut français arranged a **movie night** dedicated to the First World War with the presentation of the film "Goodbye Up There" from the novel of Pierre Lemaître.





Soldiers in Bitola  
Photograph taken by the Brothers Manaki

From October 2019 to December 2020, the Macedonian Centre for Photography was able to produce a **documentary** entitled “Different Views, Same Suffering” in order to present the **complexity and plurality** needed to address the historical conflicts.

The film was shot in Macedonia and includes surveys from Serbia, Bulgaria, Greece, France and Germany.

ALDA organized a regional forum that was held online, called “Memory and intercultural dialogue”.

The event took place online, from the 21st to the 22nd of December 2020 and was freely broadcast on the internet.

Organized in 6 round tables with around 40 speakers and 60 participants, this forum was able to bring together experts and representatives of **civil society** from 14 different countries. It kept as its main topic the Balkans and the **contemporary issues** the region, but also the world are facing.

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Until 18th December, 2020

**REGIONAL FORUM**  
“Remembrance and intercultural dialogue”  
(21-22 December, 2020)

alda CEI WBF Regional Youth Council for Europe European Union

The notions of peace, reconciliation or intercultural dialogue were included, as studying **European integration** as a factor of stability to prevent new risks of conflict.

The **interventions** were also able to focus on other topics such as the consequences of the new migration route in the Balkan Peninsula, the digital revolution, or the sensitive issue of the narration of history.

Looking on the **tensions in the region**, the role of **cultural heritage** and **remembrance tourism** has been presented as an effective tool to promote **intercultural dialogue** and **counter misinformation**.



ALDA Skopje team during the Regional forum

**Numerous partners** have participated in this international forum such as the Institut des droits de l'Homme et de la paix de Caen, the Direction du tourisme de la Région Normandie, the Association les Routes de la libération, the ALDA Local Democracy Agencies in the Balkans and the Balkan Network for Local Democracy.

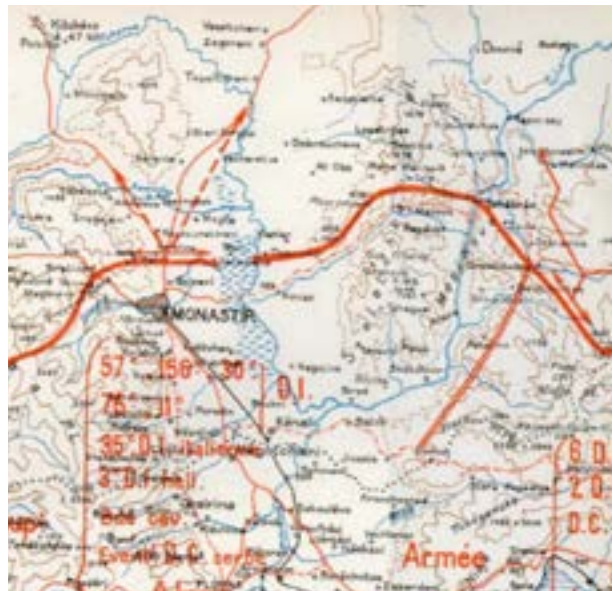
## Promotion of Heritage

The platform Discover Remembrance of the Macedonian Front was **enriched** with the new data acquired during the various events.

From the 9th to the 13th of July the municipality of Novaci welcomed Eric Allart, Michel Marc, and Jean-Michel Cador, accompanied by Stéphanie Peyrissac and Arnaud Fauconnier.



This team from Normandy was able to take part in the former 2010 project on the study of the **historical heritage** in North Macedonia, by continuing the **archaeological prospections** on the Macedonian Front in the region of Novaci and Prilep. A publication with an educational but also scientific approach was realized on the **new discoveries** of the archaeological team.



Front Monastir 1918

## EXPLORING THE STRENGTHENING OF PEACE THROUGHOUT HISTORY (2021)

This new project supported by ALDA is part of a new **regional perspective** and seeks to promote the creation of a sustainable network in the Balkan Peninsula. After multiple conflicts and tensions between the different countries and communities, ALDA set out to **preserve peace** and aims the creation of a **lasting reconciliation**. The project “Exploring the strengthening of peace throughout history” seeks to improve relations in the Balkans by addressing the **major historical events** in the region. Thereby, ALDA **raises awareness** about a shared history and the consequences of conflicts in order to establish better regional cooperation and thus enable better European integration.

Throughout 2021, the activities of this project improve the **networking** of actors of the region and the **sharing of expertise**, they have made it possible to promote the creation of **intercultural dialogues** while addressing the issue of human rights.



Symposium in Bitola, 2021

## Youth

During 2021, ALDA and the LDA in the Balkans continued the promotion of the Freedom Prize of the Normandy region, in order to **raise awareness** among the youth on peace but also **fundamental freedoms** and rights. A **workshop** was organized on the 15th of April in cooperation with the Institut des droits de l'Homme et de la paix for young French-speaking Macedonians.



Training [IN-TO] youth work  
Struga, 2022

The coalition of youth organizations SEGA in partnership with Maison pour tous Léo Lagrange in Cherbourg, Normandy, organized an introductory training in youth animation "[IN-TO] youth work" in the period from 21 to 24 February, 2022 in Struga, North Macedonia.

The purpose of this training was to share knowledge and skills on youth work to the Macedonian participants, and to help them realize themselves with the work and methods of future youth workers.

## Cultural and scientific activities

The third edition of the Bitola colloquium, which focuses on the events of the Macedonian Front but also on the **contemporary situation of the Balkans**, was held from the 11th to the 12th of November, at the Saint Clement of Ohrid University in Bitola. This **annual meeting** brought together specialists from not only the Balkans but also from Normandy.



Exhibition in the university's library  
of Bitola



Symposium in Bitola 2021

Entitled “History, art, memory and reconciliation”, this colloquium aims to address the sensitive question of the narration of history and historical disagreement. The Institut français of Skopje, which organized this event, aims to bring historians in the region to **debate and study** on a common history, and thus **overcoming nationalist divisions and tensions**.

By bringing the events of a shared past, this annual meeting allows the participants to address the issue of **regional reconciliation** and of a better **European integration**.

## Promotion of heritage

The **Cultours project**, created with the help of the Local Democracy Agencies of the Balkan region, worked with the French associations Normandie tourisme and Route de la liberté to revitalise the tourism sector in the Balkans. On May 19th, an online meeting between local stakeholders and Norman experts on **heritage tourism** was organized. The goal was to create a **sustainable and tight network** in the Balkans to support new regional partnerships in **green, heritage and education tourism**.



Regional Online forum. 2021

This meeting brought together **more than 50 participants** from Normandy but also from countries of the Western Balkans. A **mobile app** and a **circuit of 9 historical monuments** of the Second World War have been made, thus offering better visibility and a common **promotion of the regional heritage**.



The event "Post-disaster cities from a comparative perspective", organized as a part of the project "Skopje '63. Inter-ethnic cooperation, action and solidarity» has been able to offer **several interpretations** of urban tragedies in Europe and outside Europe. The event took place on the 13th December 2021, in Skopje, in a hybrid format due to health restrictions.

International experts were given the opportunity to present their **research** on several cities destroyed by disasters and their reconstruction, such as Bucharest and Mostar. It was an opportunity to introduce the Norman expertise and the «Patrimoine de la reconstruction en Normandie» label, created by the Normandy region to protect the heritage of cities rebuilt after the Second World War.

The focus was on the **presentation** of the book «The Skopje earthquake of 1963 and the post-earthquake reconstruction: Personal testimonies», created as part of this project, by young Macedonian students.



Presentation of the game  
"The rude awakening"

## Cultural and educational material

In partnership with the Norman association Mémoire pour la vie, the Center of Photographer of Macedonia, Danube Connects, 101%, The World of NGOs, Jesenice Upper Sava Museum and the municipality of Lavarone, ALDA participated in the **development of a video game** with educational goals.

Entitled «The Rude Awakening», the video game was presented to the public in Bitola in the Manaki cinema on the 15th September, date of the decisive battle of Dobro Pole.

The **presentation** was accompanied by a short exhibition and an immersive video in virtual reality.

This game takes place at the heart of the Macedonian Front in North Macedonia and aims to **raise awareness** about the events of the Great War and the living conditions faced by soldiers and civilians. The Rude Awakening is a way to promote the European heritage and history through exhibitions in different museums.

Thanks to their history teacher who is a member of the association Mémoire pour la vie, the Norman students of the city of Vire were able, to a certain extent, to **follow and take part** in the development of the video game.



Presentation of the game  
"The rude awakening"



This video game is part of the desire to **promote pacifist values** among youth, but also to raise awareness about the consequences of nationalist drifts and ethnic tensions.

Thanks to the use of new technologies, the project has the possibility of being taken to a whole new scale by being **exported** to various partner museums and institutions.

By innovating in the creation of more immersive tools such as video games or virtual reality, the cultural sector is offered a new impetus and sees its attractiveness rethought.



Animated Video: Peace, Remembrance and Reconciliation

ALDA created a video simply entitled Peace, Remembrance and Reconciliation with the purpose to **promote peace** and raise awareness about the importance of **remembrance** in the process of reconciliation.

The best way forward is to create **peace** through reconciliation, and steps need to be taken in order to facilitate that reconciliation, such as **creating dialogue** and cooperation, but most important task is to remember.


These three concepts that are intertwined and depend on each other in order to heal the war-ridden world.

## ACHIEVEMENTS

Over the past five years, the projects supported by ALDA and its various partnerships have been able to **mobilize actors** from many fields. With the support of the Normandy Peace Program, the activities were able to be part of the **promotion of European values** for peace and freedom throughout the years. National and regional stories were **rediscovered and reintroduced** to local, regional and even international audiences. By opening the activities to the rest of the population, the objective was to **raise public awareness** on remembrance issues and the concept of a shared history of different countries. In order to overcome **divisions and fight nationalism**, it is necessary to rebuild links between communities and a better inclusive society.



French cemetery in Bitola, North Macedonia



The objectives of ALDA and the Normandy Peace Program not only stick to the local and national level, but also have a **regional perspective**. To create a dynamic **sustainable network**, the projects aim to **re-establish links** between different stakeholders and populations of shared stories and issues, and thus enable more effective policy development.

The history projects resulting from this cooperation have made it possible to revitalize several sectors throughout the region.

A rising interest in some of the historical events has made it possible to start again on local heritage and thus **restore its value**. This **revitalization** is accompanied by Norman expertise and its various strategies. Each activity seeks to **link several sectors** at the same time, such as memory and solidarity, history and technology, tourism and education.



**Katica Janeva**

**Capitalisation of the activities in North Macedonia and  
Normandy through the program Normandy for Peace**

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